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6599th meeting

Wednesday, 10 August 2011, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri	(India)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	China	Mr. Yang Tao
	Colombia	Mr. Alzate
	France	Mr. Briens
	Gabon	Mr. Messone
	Germany	Mr. Berger
	Lebanon	Ms. Ziade
	Nigeria	Mr. Amieyeofori
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

The President: Under rule 37 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Somalia to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Augustine Mahiga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, to participate in this meeting.

I welcome Special Representative Mahiga, who is joining this meeting via video-teleconference from Mogadishu.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Catherine Bragg, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Augustine Mahiga.

Mr. Mahiga: I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency on behalf of your country, India. I wish also to thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to brief members of the Security Council on the latest developments in the Somalia peace process. I would also like to thank the Council for its continued support for the peace process in Somalia. This is moment of both great challenge and great opportunity for Somalia and for the international community.

At this historic juncture, I am particularly gratified to be addressing the Council once again from Mogadishu. I have just met today with the leadership of the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) and the Mogadishu business leaders. We discussed how we can work together and reinforce our shared commitment to a peaceful and stable Somalia.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia and the region in general is uppermost in our minds. The scale of humanitarian suffering is immense. The international community is mobilizing and trying to meet this remarkable challenge. Recent security developments in Mogadishu, which have unfolded at breathtaking speed, have likewise provided us with a unique opportunity and a set of very grave risks. There is a chance for real progress if we can mobilize the support necessary to capitalize on this moment.

On the political side, we have reached a critical juncture as well. The signing, on 9 June, of the Kampala Accord by President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, Speaker of the Transition Federal Parliament, ended the five-month political stalemate between the executive and the legislature on the way forward. By deferring the elections for one year and providing for the establishment of a road map with clear benchmarks, timelines and compliance mechanisms for the implementation of priority transitional tasks, the Kampala Accord sets us on a new forward trajectory in the peace process.

I am also encouraged by the timely manner in which the Accord has been implemented so far. In a show of statesmanship, former Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed resigned his post on 19 June, 20 days ahead of the deadline provided for in the Accord. His successor, Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, was overwhelmingly endorsed by Parliament on 28 June, five days after his appointment by President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed.

On 11 July, the Parliament overwhelmingly endorsed the Kampala Accord, in effect receiving a three-year extension in conformity with the one-year extension of the Government. On 20 July, the new Prime Minister appointed a new, lean Cabinet of 18 ministers. I am heartened to note that all of these developments have taken place ahead of the timelines envisaged in the Accord.

This is a critical moment in the Somali peace process, and for Somalia itself. We are beginning to undertake the substantive work of implementing the road map, which outlines the key tasks to be accomplished in the next 12 months. This phase will begin with the adoption of the road map at a consultative meeting on ending the transition in Somalia, which, after some unfortunate delays, will now be held from 4 to 6 September.

The preparatory committee, chaired by the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), is

completing its work. This morning, the committee discussed the details of a meeting here in Mogadishu chaired by the Prime Minister and held in the presence of the newly appointed Cabinet. The adoption of the road map will give the people of Somalia much-needed ownership of the process and will send a clear signal that real political progress is finally within our grasp.

The unequivocal support and attention of the international community in this time of crisis will be especially crucial in order to solidify and guarantee the progress already achieved. The international community must be ready to provide tangible support to the political, humanitarian and security tracks. At the same time, we will put in place a high-level regular initiative to monitor compliance and make it clear to the TFIs that there will be consequences for obstruction and inaction.

The recent and unexpected withdrawal of the Al-Shabaab insurgent group from Mogadishu is likewise a significant event that presents both great opportunities and, again, new challenges. For the first time in years, the TFG has the prospect of exercising authority over the whole of Mogadishu, which is a welcome development that, if managed effectively, will expedite political gains and the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance to the thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have travelled to Mogadishu in a desperate attempt to escape the devastating famine.

Although Al-Shabaab has described the retreat as only a tactical manoeuvre, the truth remains that Al-Shabaab has been compelled to retreat from Mogadishu. Here I pay tribute to the forces of the TFG and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for their hard work and sacrifice in pushing back the insurgents. Al-Shabaab's withdrawal is the culmination of a number of factors, including the pressure that those forces have steadily brought to bear on the insurgents.

But it is vital to highlight here that significant dangers remain as well. The TFG and AMISOM both have limited resources to exploit the opportunity presented by the withdrawal of Al-Shabaab. Pockets of Al-Shabaab remain in Mogadishu, the security situation remains precarious, and the insurgents are likely to resort to terrorist attacks and guerrilla tactics targeting the TFG and AMISOM forces and, unfortunately, even the internally displaced and other civilians.

The insurgents' sudden withdrawal from Mogadishu and the rapid spread of famine have radically changed our planning horizon. Events we had anticipated coming to pass in a year or 18 months are happening right now. It is essential, in that regard, for the TFIs to remain united and coherent, and that they put in place basic administrative structures and promote law and order in areas under their control. Without immediate action to fill this gap, a real danger exists that the warlords and their militia groups will move forward to fill the vacuum created by Al-Shabaab's departure. The TFG should immediately assume a coordinating role in order to bring local militia under its authority.

We also must encourage and assist the revival of economic activities in Mogadishu, especially in the Bakara market, the beating commercial heart of the city that, as recently as last week, was under the control of the insurgents. As I said, I met today with a group of Somali business leaders and I was very encouraged by what I heard. They are ready to do their part, and we should help.

I am pleased to inform the Council that the TFG's National Security Council met and created a Mogadishu security plan through which the Government is defining its priorities, including its resource requirements. The plan calls for the Somali Police Force, rather than its military personnel, to occupy the areas vacated by the insurgents. I call on the international community to expedite the building of the capacities of the Somali Police Force to allow this institution to protect, inter alia, the increasing number of IDPs in Mogadishu. As Somali police deploy in the recently recovered areas, we must expedite the deployment of AMISOM police personnel and equipment so that they complement the efforts of the Somali police in protecting civilians and promoting the rule of law.

In UNPOS, we are adjusting to respond to the new situation and to meet such new challenges. We originally anticipated that Mogadishu would be stabilized within roughly a year, but we are now revising our planning to focus on the immediate. We are now actively planning for an expanded United Nations presence inside Somalia, rather than the light footprint that we had envisaged. It is thus critical to the

Mission that we secure the logistical support, including the fast-track construction of permanent facilities, to pave the way for the deployment of additional staff in Somalia, especially in Mogadishu. An additional guard force, under AMISOM, must be dedicated to providing protection and facilitating movement for United Nations staff in Mogadishu. It is vital and is an immediate requirement.

I ask the Council to seriously consider bringing forward the proposed guard force with the resources that are available and all that it entails in order to ensure that AMISOM can successfully meet those new challenges and adapt to the new reality on the ground in Mogadishu.

Central to our strategy will be the augmentation of AMISOM's capabilities, including personnel, logistics, mobility, aviation and unexploded ordnance disposal. The force is now being asked to perform a series of additional complex tasks, such as the protection of IDPs, the consolidation of vacated positions and the facilitation of humanitarian assistance. The AMISOM Force Commander, who is sitting here on my right, faces a dilemma over the deployment of his forces to a much larger area of cooperation without the key enablers or the full complement of Security Council-authorized troops. Significantly, the additional demands of the humanitarian community to protect and assist with the delivery of humanitarian aid also stretch the Mission's limited resources.

Significant gaps in the United Nations support package to AMISOM still exist. The force requires adequate, predictable and sustainable funding to cover self-sustainment, which includes the most basic, yet essential, life-support items and services integral to supporting all peace operations. I appeal to the Council to consider expanding the support package for AMISOM to cover some of the critical categories of self-sustainment and to look at the issue of the funding of contingent-owned equipment.

I am gravely concerned, as we all are, by the humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding before our eyes. Nearly half of the Somali population — 3.7 million people — is now in care and directly at risk due to the famine. Tens of thousands have already perished. Most of the vulnerable reside in the south of the country. As our humanitarian partners predicted, famine is spreading further in south and central Somalia, and the other regions are now designated famine zones. In parts of Lower Shabelle and in the settlements of internally displaced persons in and around Mogadishu, more than 13 out of 10,000 children under 5 years of age die every day as a result of malnutrition and famine-related diseases. That means that 10 per cent of children under 5 die every 11 weeks. Those figures are truly heart-wrenching. I hope that we can collectively view them as nothing less than a call to immediate action.

Indeed, it is not too late to act. Every day counts. I strongly urge members of the Council to appeal to their own Governments and to the international community to generously support the humanitarian relief operation currently under way in Somalia. We need approximately $1 billion for Somalia, channelled through our Consolidated Appeals Process, to avert a further worsening of the emergency. So far, we have received less than 50 per cent of that sum. Our humanitarian partners are working tirelessly and stand ready to further scale up their operations. However, our efforts must focus on reaching all of those in urgent need wherever they are in Somalia.

I appeal to all opposition groups in Somalia to lay down their arms during the peace process and to allow aid agencies to access all Somalis in dire need of assistance.

As I have said a number of times, this is an extraordinary moment for Somalia. There are both great opportunities for progress and huge risks and challenges to be overcome. Now is the time for the international community to demonstrate its commitment and to step forward and robustly support the peace process immediately on all fronts. The Somali people simply cannot wait any longer.

The President: I thank Mr. Mahiga for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Catherine Bragg.

Ms. Bragg: I thank the Council for the opportunity to brief its members this morning on the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

Since our last briefing of 26 July, the magnitude of the crisis has become even greater. A little less than two weeks ago, the United Nations declared a famine in two regions in Somalia and warned that urgent action needed to be taken to prevent famine from spreading further. On 3 August, the Food and

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit announced that famine thresholds had been surpassed in the three additional areas of southern Somalia, in Middle Shabelle, the Afgoye corridor internally displaced persons (IDPs) settlement and the Mogadishu IDP community.

Nationwide, 3.7 million people are in crisis, with 3.2 million people in need of immediate life-saving assistance, of whom 2.8 million are in south-central Somalia. That is twice the entire population of Manhattan. Children are the most affected by the crisis, and an estimated 1.25 million children across southern Somalia are in urgent need of life-saving assistance. Tens of thousands of children have already died, and many more will die in the coming days unless aid is provided to them.

The under-five mortality rate is higher than 4 per 10,000 per day in all areas of the south, peaking at 13 per 10,000 per day in the riverine and agro-pastoral areas of Lower Shabelle and among Afgoye and Mogadishu IDPs. Let me illustrate what 13 per 10,000 per day actually means. It means that by the time I go to bed tonight, 13 people, six of whom would be under 5 years of age, would have died, and tomorrow 13 will also die. That will continue the day after that unless we can reverse the trend. And this is only in one community of 10,000. As we all know, the IDP community is a great deal larger than that in the famine area.

According to the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit, the current situation represents the most severe humanitarian crisis in the world today, and Africa's worst food security crisis since Somalia's famine of 1991 and 1992. We have not yet seen the peak of the crisis, as further deterioration is considered likely given the very high levels of both severe acute malnutrition and under-five mortality in combination with an expectation of a continued increase in local cereal prices and a below-average rainy season harvest.

The drought crisis has generated displacement on a large scale within Somalia, as well as refugee outflows into Kenya and Ethiopia. An estimated 100,000 people, fleeing drought and famine, have reached Mogadishu over the past two months alone in search of food, water and shelter. In addition to the 370,000 people who were already displaced to the capital, to date the overall number of IDPs in Somalia is estimated at 1.5 million. An estimated 410,000 IDPs are located in the 15 kilometre stretch of road in the Afgoye corridor outside Mogadishu.

Since 1 August, an estimated 1,500 Somali refugees have crossed the border into Kenya on a daily basis. In Ethiopia, the number of refugees has decreased from over 1,000 to an average of 270 people a day.

A massive multisectoral response is critical to prevent additional deaths and total livelihood and social collapse. Health interventions are as important as the provision of food aid or therapeutic feeding, in particular since, with the start of the rains in October, the risk of epidemic disease due to a lack of access to potable water is likely to increase.

In recent weeks, some progress has been made in scaling up the response. For example, on 4 August, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced the increase of its emergency operations in central and southern Somalia to assist more than 1 million people affected by drought and conflict. The ICRC has been the only organization allowed to conduct food distribution in Al-Shabaab areas since the suspension of World Food Programme (WFP) operations in January 2010.

In areas under the control of Al-Shabaab, the United Nations and its partners continue to negotiate access with local authorities and communities to reach new areas and move closer to the people affected. In July, following assessment missions to two newly accessible areas in the Gedo area, where spontaneous settlements are springing up due to the increased movement of people, we have seen an increase in the delivery of life-saving assistance to the most needy, including, for example, a wet-feeding programme providing 25,000 meals per day for five days, starting 2 August.

UNICEF is boosting its supply pipeline to support the existing supplementary feeding centres, stabilization centres and therapeutic feeding centres. Blanket supplementary feeding is meanwhile scheduled to start this week, with priority given to operations in famine-affected regions, including in Lower Shabelle. Supplies will assist an estimated 154,000 people.

Since 27 July, 97 tons of supplies have been airlifted to Mogadishu, Gedo and Lower Juba to treat some 34,000 malnourished children under five years of

age for one month. High-energy biscuits have also been airlifted to the areas of Gedo and Lower Juba to feed 60,000 people.

Emergency measles campaigns targeting more than 72,000 children aged six months to 15 years are under way in accessible districts in the Gedo region, while negotiations are under way with local authorities to secure access to additional areas. A measles vaccination campaign targeting 40,000 children under five years of age was completed in Mogadishu. Furthermore, a health campaign targeting 215,000 children under five years of age with measles and polio vaccines was carried out along the Somali-Kenyan border.

Across southern and central Somalia, sanitation activities have reached almost 340,000 people. Water interventions, such as borehole rehabilitation and water trucking, have reached over 817,000 people.

In Mogadishu this week, an Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees airlift carrying 31 tons of shelter material and some 2,500 emergency assistance packages for thousands of displaced people landed in the capital, for the first time in five years.

However, humanitarian operations in Mogadishu remain complex, and the scaling up of activities is not a quick endeavour. Humanitarian actors are still assessing the implications of the withdrawal of Al-Shabaab from Mogadishu. It remains unclear if this move is a complete pull-out or a change of tactics on the part of Al-Shabaab, or how this new scenario will affect overall security and our ability to deliver humanitarian aid.

Furthermore, the capacity of the local civilian administration in supporting the delivery of aid and ensuring the security of IDP sites remains weak. Last Friday, for example, 10 people were shot dead at an IDP site in the area under the control of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the African Union Mission in Somalia, when local clan militias attempted to loot resources destined for IDPs.

Earlier this week, on 8 August, the Humanitarian Coordinator met with the Prime Minister in Mogadishu, together with the Department of Safety and Security, WFP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to discuss the scaling up of the humanitarian programme and improving security at IDP sites.

Last week, the TFG created the Disaster Management Agency (DMA) to coordinate the provision of humanitarian assistance. The Prime Minister reassured the United Nations delegation that the Government would be able to negotiate secure access to assist delivery in the camps. However, technical support will still be required, and OCHA is now following up with DMA to improve information-sharing on the delivery of assistance.

At the current juncture, it is of paramount importance that the capacity of the local administration be strengthened to allow proper coordination between the humanitarian community and the Government and ensure that the Government fully discharges its responsibilities with regard to the protection of the civilian population.

I would like to conclude my statement with some remarks on the funding situation of humanitarian programmes. To date, the United Nations Consolidated Appeal for Somalia is funded at 46 per cent. Humanitarian partners still require more than $560 million for life-saving assistance. In the region, we still urgently need $1.3 billion to save lives. Donors have committed more than $1 billion to the response so far, and continue to pledge more. We are very grateful, especially in these difficult economic times. But the magnitude of human suffering in Somalia today demands more.

Despite the difficulty of operating in one of the most conflict-riven countries in the world, we cannot let people down. Our response must be scaled up, and the resources to support that effort must be provided.

Every day counts. We believe that tens of thousands have already died. Hundreds of thousands face imminent starvation and death. We can act to prevent further loss of life and ensure the survival of those who are on the brink of death.

A massive multisectoral response to save lives in the immediate term and rebuild livelihoods in the medium-short term are critical. We will continue to appeal to donors to provide the resources needed to respond to the crisis. We expect assistance needs to continue for the rest of this year, if not longer.

As we have stressed over recent weeks, this is the most severe food crisis emergency in the world right now. We must treat it with the urgency it demands.

The President: I thank Ms. Bragg for her briefing.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.